

PITSTONE & IVINGHOE MUSEUM SOCIETY

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 15th NOVEMBER 2007 AT PITSTONE GREEN MUSEUM AT 20.00

1. Present:- Chairman - Kit Kite, Treasurer, Museum Manager & Membership Secretary - Norman Groom, Deputy Museum Manager - Peter Keeley, Committee Member and Trustee - John Wallis and 23 members.

2. Apologies were received from:- Anne Ball (Publicity Secretary), Jeannette Wallis (Trading Secretary), Brenda Grace (Secretary), Sue Lipscombe (Programme Secretary), Libby Thomson, Mike Malone, Barbara Barber, Hazel Barber, John Barber, John Cole.

3. Minutes of the AGM 16th November 2006 were approved, agreed and signed by chairman Kit Kite. Approval proposed by Norman Groom, seconded by Peter Keeley and carried.

4. Matters arising

No matters arising

5. Chairman's Report – Kit Kite

I think the last year has been one of the most successful in the history of the Museum. Although the number of visitors was very slightly down on the previous year these were some of the comments: "Lovely show. Wish you were open every week", "Is this the place which has a Lancaster Bomber?" "Had a wonderful time. Will certainly come again", "Have you a list of your opening times, my son would like to come", "My children loved the model railway". I heard these and many more as I chatted to people as they passed through the Reception Area. The continued success of the Museum is totally down to Norman and his "Merry Volunteers". I am pleased to say that several new members have joined the team and are already giving valuable help. Unfortunately, John and Jeanette, two of our longest-serving members, are not seeking re-election to the Committee but are staying in the Society as active members. This also applies to me as ill-health has caused my not seeking re-election but I will still be around.

May I please take this opportunity to thank everyone for their help, support and friendship since I first joined the Museum.

Having delivered the above report Kit said that he was going to make a small change in the agenda by bringing forward the election of a new chairman. He said that a nomination had been received for David Goseltine to assume this post; he said that David had been a Society member longer than most, if not all of us, and that he had served for many years on this committee some years ago. He had been proposed by Rob Barber and seconded by Dave Fuller and he asked for a show of hands from the meeting to signify agreement. This was unanimous and David Goseltine came forward to take the chair.

Kit took his leave of the meeting giving apologies and saying he felt he had just enough breath left to return home.

6. Treasurer's Report – Norman Groom

Our financial year ends on March 31st and one of the accounts you have a copy of is for the year ending March this year. In spite of spending some £5000 on a grass mower we ended up with over £2000 in our current account without digging in to our reserve funds. A breakdown of the income and expenditure is given on sheet 2. If you have any questions regarding these accounts I will answer them now.

Details of a part of this year's transaction from 1st April are shown on the single additional sheet as presented to the last committee meeting in August. Since this sheet was prepared we have paid out over £700 in rents and incurred further expenditure on the new rooms. This year our expenditure at the museum has obviously been considerable as we are about to complete the new rooms and to start some work on the extension to the science room. We will however gain some 1000 square ft of additional exhibition area due to these projects and further space will eventually be available when the loft above this meeting room is brought up to the standard of this room. By careful control of our expenditure we hope to remain within the funds available in our current account by the time we derive further income from our next open day at Easter 2008.

John Wallis proposed, John Youngs seconded, that the accounts be accepted and the meeting agreed unanimously

A question was raised regarding rates; the questioner had not seen this item in our accounts before. Norman said that this year Aylesbury Vale District Council had decided to make a charge. Peter Keeley said that as we are a registered charity we are entitled to an 80% reduction in the rates we pay, and at the discretion of the Council we can be given a 100% reduction as has been the case every year since we took the lease of the Museum. This

year, in their wisdom, they decided to only give us a 90% reduction and an appeal against this is being formulated when time permits.

Membership

Our membership remains substantially constant, we gain a few and we lose a few throughout the year. The numbers stand at 62 individual members and 45 dual memberships, a total of 152 individuals.

7. Museum Report – Peter Keeley

Peter said he did not want to repeat what he had already written in the quarterly museum reports in the Newsletter but would just touch briefly on 5 subjects which may not have been fully covered.

- i) The year's performance on the 8 public open days has been remarkably good and takings were well up on last year, which in turn was considered good. This year we were hampered by an appalling late May bank holiday Monday when it rained solidly all day leading to takings half of the previous year. We almost broke the £10,000 barrier for the total profit this year and should do so easily next year with the entrance fees scheduled to rise. Maybe we shall also break the '£2000 on one day' barrier which we have come quite close to on two occasions.
- ii) Our application for 'Accredited Museum' status has gone in. It has been hard work for Norman and me. We had not realised just how complex the form-filling would be and almost left it too late to finish on time. It would have been much easier if there was a computer on line at the Museum but, although we did some work together on a computer here, most of the work had to be done at home. Norman did a lot at his home first as my computer was ailing; then I finished it off as I had switched to 'broadband'. Towards the end there were two sections which required input from other people, but we were told to send in the application without this as there were difficulties in obtaining what was required and nobody seemed inclined to help.
- iii) School visits is an area where we do not seem to fare very well. There is a publicity website which seems very keen to have us on board to increase the number of these visits, but this would cost money initially (and until next Easter open day we are quite short of ready cash), and if visits did increase significantly we only have John Wallis who is able to meet the visitors. This subject needs careful consideration before we move ahead.
- iv) I must pay tribute to Sandra Barnard, our Archivist, who works away at the most boring tasks in the office upstairs which is more like being in a prison cell than an office. She has scanned to computer almost all of our (thousands of ?) photographs we have in store and she has started, with others on the massive programme of checking that what our computer says is in a certain room is actually there and numbered, and conversely what is in each location is actually logged on the computer. So far there have been many anomalies to be sorted out, such as the computer saying there is nothing at all in the Blacksmith's Shop, etc.
- v) And finally volunteers; there is a steady trickle of new faces joining the Tuesday, Thursday & Sunday working parties at the museum, but they are all people who are good at doing something, such as retired tradesmen, engineers etc; all practical people with many skills. What we need more now are people who are willing but with no special skills; people who would help tidy up before an open day, people who would help Sandra, and Mike & Jean Morris on inventory checking, people who could wield a paint brush (during summer of course), people who have, or would like to acquire, gardening skills, and many more mundane tasks.

8. Programme – Sue Lipscomb (read in Sue's absence by Norman Groom)

I feel very heartened by the upward turn of attendance numbers during the last year. We have had some very good speakers bringing with them such fascinating subjects as Long Case clocks, magic lantern shows, Victorian bottles and the Luton Hoo walled garden. The average attendance for these talks is 33, which compares very favourably with the averages over the last few years.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank Mary Tyrrell who turns up without fail to organise the refreshments and Norman and Peter who deal with the chairs in the hall on a regular basis.

9. Publicity Report - Anne Ball (read in Anne's absence by Norman Groom)

Another busy season has finished for us all, including publicity. The leaflets were distributed in good time and my thanks to those who helped with this time-consuming task. As Easter is early in 2008, I need to get this task done much earlier next year.

We continue to use free publicity wherever we can, including, of course, newspapers and local radio stations. I do know the local newspapers are quite supportive but I am not sure if all the local radio stations give us a mention prior to an opening day. I would be interested to learn if anyone has more information on this subject. We also put up posters locally, designed by Norman Groom.

The boards showing our open days are put up just before an open day and taken down immediately after. This appears to bring in quite a few visitors, so is successful but again this depends on volunteers.

10. Election of officers and committee members

The following nominations had all been received with the name of proposer and seconder and the candidates agreement to serve, and were taken by the chairman in the following order.

Position	Name	Proposer	Secunder
i) Vice chairman	Norman Groom	David Goseltine	Peter Keeley
ii) Treasurer	John Youngs	Ken Leach	Michael Bickerton
iii) Secretary			

At this point Peter Keeley said that Brenda Grace had not been well for some weeks and had asked him to take the minutes of this meeting. Brenda had said that she would like to continue as secretary when she is feeling better provided someone could carry out her duties until that time. Peter said that he was willing to act as deputy secretary and invited the meeting to re-elect Brenda as secretary and to elect himself as deputy secretary. The chairman invited proposals and Rob Barber proposed, Jean de Selincourt seconded that Brenda be re-elected secretary; the chairman proposed, Rob Barber seconded that Peter be elected deputy secretary; both were elected on a show of hands.

iv) Museum Manager	Norman Groom	David Goseltine	Peter Keeley
v) Deputy Museum Manager	Rob Barber	Dave Fuller	Ron Ashurst
vi) Business Manager	Peter Keeley		Rob Barber
vii) Museum Site Manager	John Childs	David Goseltine	Ron Ashurst
viii) Programme Secretary	Sue Lipscombe		
ix) Publicity Secretary	Anne Ball	Bill Barnard	John Wallis
x) Committee	Nigel Thompson	Ken Leach	Rob Barber

Non-committee posts

i) Membership secretary	Bill Barnard	Sandra Barnard	Jean Morris
ii) Archivist	Sandra Barnard	Norman Groom	John Smith

All the above were elected by show of hands, either unanimously or by a substantial majority.

11. Appointment of Independent Examiner

Roy Geary said he is willing to continue with this position. Proposed by David Goseltine and seconded by John Wallis and carried.

12. Any other business

i) It is believed that the take over as our landlords by The National Trust is very imminent. What was believed to be the legal document covering this was signed by most of the executors of Jeff Hawkins and witnessed by a museum volunteer in Museum Reception a week ago. At a preliminary meeting some weeks ago we were offered various forms of help such as publicity and assistance in seeking grants, and technical assistance from their experts, but were told that there was positively no money available either as grants or rebates.

ii) Mike Morris proposed a vote of thanks to the previous committee for all their work and was unanimous on a show of hands.

iii) A question re the Museum water supply was taken by Norman Groom. He explained that the water has been tested to reveal small traces of contamination by a common species of bacterium. Our options are to continue using the existing supply but boiling it before consumption by people, to install expensive purification plant, or to pay of the order of £700 to Anglian Water to connect our already installed pipe to their main close by via a meter.

iv) A question regarding our rent was also taken by Norman Groom who explained that under the terms of our lease our annual rent is based on the number of general public attending on open days and is on an escalating scale for a few more years yet until it peaks at a maximum which will apply for the remainder of the lease

v) It was noted that our September open day always clashed with the national Heritage Weekend when many establishments were open free of charge and some visitors to the Museum expected free admission. Obviously we cannot give free admission, but a change of date for September opening would need to be agreed a long while in advance and would complicate publicity which at present simply states that we open on the second Sunday of the summer season months.

The meeting closed at 20:45.